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chemical warfare laboratories

The laboratories were in the Lefortovo (now Baumanski) Rayon of Moscow, near the present Military Chemical Defense Academy. The laboratories were under the Chief Military Chemical Administration of the Soviet Army (Glavnoye Voenno-Khimicheskoye Upravleniye RKKA) in Moscow. The VTA (Voenno Tekhnicheskaya Akademiya - Military Technical Academy) in Leningrad also existed at that time and offered courses for the chemical, communications, engineering, and armored services. In 1932, this academy was abolished and separate military academies were set up for the technical services.

chickens dying from exposure to some poison gas, perhaps yperite /mustard gas/.

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There were about 25 chemists at the installation and [] it was an important activity. Of course [] these laboratories would be old fashioned and the science undeveloped compared to present conditions. []

2.

2. Dissemination of toxics by means of aircraft was considered the best method in theory; in practice little was done in this field. Only liquid toxics were to be disseminated from aircraft. As this was considered the most efficient method, defense against it was stressed. The liquid gases which were to be disseminated from aircraft were of two types: a) "stoikiye" (long lasting, ie two or three days), such as lewisite and yperite; and b) "ne stoikiye" (temporary, ie about one hour), which would poison enemy personnel but not the locality. Considered as methods and equipment of secondary importance were chemical mortars, chemical artillery shells (to be used primarily by divisional artillery), and metal gas cylinders. []

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[] in regard to war gases, it was thought perfectly possible that they might be used. It was always stated that gas would be used only in retaliation. [] one should not place too much reliance in this statement! Instruction was given concerning the use of flame and smoke. There was only one type of flame thrower, a portable unit which could be carried on a man's back. The same unit was used in tanks. "Neutral" smoke was used for camouflage purposes and irritating smokes were utilized to produce tears and difficulty in breathing.

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4. There were two types of independent chemical service units: the chemical company and the chemical mortar battalion. The Soviet Army T/O provided in theory for quite a few chemical units. Quite frequently, prior to mid-1941, the units were actually to be found in the army. Both the chemical companies and the chemical mortar battalion were assigned to army and were to be attached to divisions as needed. The battalion was to be used only in the offense.

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The company was to be used for either offensive or defensive operations. In event of chemical warfare, the company would use metal gas cylinders and utilize liquid gas to deny terrain to the enemy. In defense, it would engage in such activities as decontamination.

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In theory, there was to be a chemical platoon in regiment and a chemical company in division. In practice, units such as division and regiment generally had only an officer with the title of "nachalnik khimsluzhbi" (chief, chemical service), who was assisted by one other chemical officer. The "nachalnik" was charged with having a plan ready, in case of need, to form quickly a chemical platoon or company. Some chemical equipment was available in the "til" (rear area). Each soldier had a gas mask. Each company had an NCO who acted as chemical instructor, teaching the soldiers use of the gas mask and decontamination procedures. The NCO instructors were taught by the "nachalnik khimsluzhbi." The chemical platoon was a defensive unit only, charged with such tasks as decontamination and use of masks. In areas behind the combat zone, organized chemical units were available in case of need. During World War II, or at least up to mid-1942, there were no chemical units on the front; only the "nachalniki khimsluzhbi." At least one reason for this was that transportation and other facilities were lacking except for the most vital operations, and the chemical service apparently was not considered to be in this category. The military districts each had one or more independent chemical companies. The one in Central Asia was located in Dzhambul. In theory, it was to expand into two or three chemical companies on mobilization and be attached to army. However, the chemical units were left behind because of the lack of transportation and other facilities.

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5.

information on two officers who were connected with the chemical service. Major General (fnu) Vershinin /his rank was equivalent to that of Brigadier General in the US Army/ attained his rank after World War II. He is not the same person as the Marshal of the Air Force of the same name. In 1939-1941, Vershinin was a colonel in charge of the chemical troops of the Central Asian military district. The troops consisted of one chemical company, plus the chemical officers attached to units of the other arms, such as the infantry. Vershinin was about 35 years old.

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Major General (fnu) Viazanichev reached this rank prior to World War II. He was a senior instructor of tactics of chemical troops at the Chemical Academy. On 20 Jul 41 he was assigned as "Nachalnik Khimichiski Sluzhbi Severnovo Fronta" (Chief, Chemical Service, Northern Front). he was about 42 years of age.

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6. Chemical reserve officers attending the Froliche camp were given a four months' course, from 1 June until 1 October. About 30% of instruction hours was devoted to general tactics and tactics of chemical units; this included study of topography. The balance of theoretical instruction dealt with theory (primarily organization) and practical doctrine of the chemical service. Manuals were used as textbooks. Practical work at Froliche was extensive. Each officer student played the role of an enlisted man, in that he performed all the tasks which a chemical service soldier was expected to know. No real gases were used at Froliche, except during one or two demonstrations. Practical work consisted of

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various activities. One was the use of decontamination equipment. Two-wheeled carts and trucks sprinkled "khlornaya izvest" [calcium hypochlorite] in order to decontaminate an area. Decontamination showers were also used. There were tank trucks designed to sprinkle liquid poison gas. There were metal gas cylinders. Gas masks were of course available. There were "dimovii shashki" (smoke caps), which were designed to be ignited and left burning in position. There was a tank company, consisting of 10 T-26 tanks equipped with flame throwers, for use against personnel and pillboxes. In addition, there was a chemical mortar platoon, equipped with 122 mm mortars. In regard to textbooks available for students and for instructors, they were the same. They consisted of manuals on the organization and functions of the chemical service, of technical booklets for each type of chemical equipment and decontamination procedures, and of training booklets prepared by the Chemical Academy. The training booklets dealt in detail with such subjects as chemical support for an infantry division in the attack, in defense, and on the march. [redacted] the reserve officer students were individuals who had previously already studied chemistry and related subjects and were brought to Froliche in order to be oriented to the military service.

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7. The military faculty of the Military Chemical Defense Academy was attended only by army officers. The two technical faculties obtained their students direct from high school and appointed them lieutenants. These students, during their first summer at the Froliche camp, were taught basic tactics. The senior students from the technical faculties of the Chemical Academy who were attending Froliche [redacted] had, of course, already been studying science for four years. In regard to their curriculum at Froliche [redacted] assume they also had practical work. Their stay at Froliche was normally from 15 May until 15 September.

8. Soviet chemical warfare equipment capable of offensive use included mortars, metal gas cylinders, smoke cans, chemical artillery shells, flame throwers, and any substitutes for VAP (Vilivnii Aviatsonii Pribori - Airborne Spraying Equipment). Defensive equipment consisted of gas masks (basically similar to the German masks [redacted] decontamination equipment, and protective clothing of various types. [redacted] same type of flame thrower was used whether it was carried by the individual soldier or tank-mounted. In either case, the flame thrower was considered to be a part of the chemical service. The flame thrower was not effective beyond 25 meters. The metal gas cylinder was called "gazovi balon dlia gazo pusa" or, simply, "gazovi balon." It could be used when it was either in an erect or prone position. There were different sizes. It was similar to the cylinders used for oxygen in hospitals, but lighter and shorter, capable of being carried by one man. It was intended to be opened when the wind was blowing in the desired direction so that the gas would be carried toward the enemy. Only non-liquid gas - "dephosgen" [diphosgene] - was intended to be used in such an operation. There were also metal cylinders for liquid gas and these were used to fill tank trucks designed for the gas. In addition, metal gas cylinders were used in combination with crop spraying equipment in aircraft, in place of the non-existent VAP.

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9. [redacted] chemical warfare demonstration carried out by well-trained troops at Froliche in the early summer of 1941. The troops, in protective clothing and masks, first contaminated an area by using tank trucks which sprinkled real liquid poison gas. The quantity of gas used, however, was smaller than under actual combat conditions, had chemical warfare been practiced. The area was then decontaminated by means of "khlornaya izvest" sprayed from trucks. Decontamination shower tents were erected. Finally, the vehicles were decontaminated by means of a chlorine solution. The use of tank-mounted flame throwers and smoke cans was also demonstrated.

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10. [redacted] chemical air training camp near Makat [redacted] it was uninhabited and suitable for that type of training, and indeed probably appropriate for testing of atom bombs. In theory there were to have been chemical aircraft bombs for spreading

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of liquid gas, but there were none. Because of the lack of suitable equipment, the month's course at Makat consisted mainly of theoretical instruction, which could have been given as well in Moscow.

11. In regard to the chemical summer training camp at Froliche, it was attended by all the students of the Chemical Academy (except, as indicated above, by senior students of the Academy's military faculty) and by chemical reserve officers. One tank company was permanently stationed at Froliche. It consisted of the 10 T-26 tanks equipped with flame throwers, which were considered to belong to the Academy. There were also one chemical mortar platoon, one signal company, and an administrative company. There were no units engaged in exercises at Froliche. Three kilometers south of Froliche there was a small depot for poison gases which might be required for training purposes. It was empty at times. There was a small chemical laboratory at Froliche intended for use only if something unexpected happened, such as a need to check whether gas containers were properly sealed. The real laboratories were at the Academy. There were no facilities for the manufacture of chemical agents at Froliche.
12. In regard to Soviet chemical schools other than the Military Chemical Defense Academy in Moscow, there was a military chemical school (voenno khimicheskoye uchilishe) which graduated lieutenants for the chemical service. [redacted]

[redacted] Some of its graduates later attended the military faculty of the Military Chemical Defense Academy. In the army proper there were from two thousand to three thousand chemical service officers. In peacetime, there was a chemical officer in each infantry regiment and artillery regiment, two or three chemical officers on division staff, plus chemical units. The Military Chemical Defense Academy also offered "chemical academic courses" (khimicheskoye akademicheskoye kursy) for captains and majors, prior to their advancement to higher rank. The course was offered about every two years, had only approximately 30 or 40 students, and lasted about eight or nine months. [redacted]

[redacted] in regard to civilian institutions, there were chemical institutes and also universities had chemical faculties. There were also military chemical research laboratories, probably all in Moscow. [redacted] they operated more or less independently except that they were all probably under the over-all authority of the military chemical administration.
13. [redacted]

[redacted] In 1936 and 1937 chemical experiments were conducted in Central Asia - in the Golodnaya Steppe, 120 kilometers southwest of Tashkent. I have no information on these experiments.

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